

# Women Warriors Newsletter



Women Veterans Program  
Providence VA Medical Center  
Rhode Island

## WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

*You served, you deserve  
★ the best care anywhere.*



**Don't go it alone. We're here to help**

The VA has responded to the growing number of Women Veterans by developing a continuum of mental health services to meet their unique needs. Women Veterans can receive a wide range of mental health services from VA Medical Centers, including formal psychological assessment and evaluation, outpatient individual and group psychotherapy, and residential/inpatient care. Specialty services target problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, depression, and homelessness.

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) can be an issue for Women Veterans as well, with 21 percent of women seen in VHA in 2008 reporting to their VA health care provider that they experienced MST while in the military. Recognizing this, VA provides all physical and mental health care for conditions related to MST free of charge and Veterans may be able to receive these services even if they are not eligible for other VA care. In addition, Vet Centers across the nation provide readjustment counseling services for Veterans and their families. The VA has also founded a national suicide prevention hotline to ensure that Veterans who are in crisis have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. The number to the hotline is:

**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

**Press "1" to talk to a professional counselor at any time.**

## FIRSTS!



**Lt. Kara Hultgreen**, the Navy's first fully qualified female Fleet fighter pilot, was only 29 when her Tomcat slammed into the Pacific Ocean in 1994. Sadly, She was the first female combat pilot to die in service.

The first, and only, woman to receive **The Medal of Honor** was **Dr. Mary E. Walker**, a contract surgeon during the Civil War.



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Winter 2009



## Women's Health Care Team

Dr Dawna Blake, Women's  
Health Care Director

Pilar Capili, RN, Clinic  
Coordinator

Beth Grady, LCSW, Women  
Veterans Program Manager

Karen Chase, NP, Provider

Dr Joan Karl, Provider

Dr Neha Pathak, Provider

Joyce Simon, NP, Provider

Dr Natalie Mariano, Hyan-  
nis CBOC, Provider

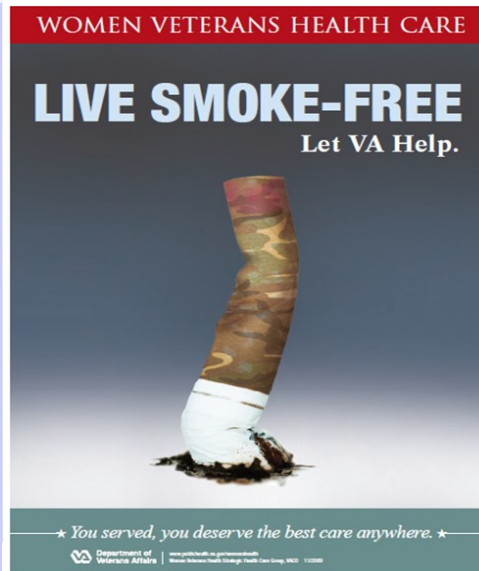
Dr Gregory Nye, New Bed-  
ford CBOC, Provider

Dr Terri Tamase, Middle-  
town CBOC, Provider



## One of the hardest things you will ever do is to *quit* smoking.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of premature death and a leading cause of illness and mortality. Smoking and tobacco use persists as one of the VA's biggest public health challenges. The rate of smoking among Veterans in the VA health care system is higher than among the general U.S.



More information is available from the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking/>.

*Women, the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. Veterans, are included in this VA health concern. Cigarette smoking kills an estimated 178,000 women in the United States annually,<sup>1</sup> most often from smoking-related lung cancer. Women who smoke also have an increased risk for other cancers, infertility and pregnancy-related problems such as pre-term delivery, stillbirth, and low birth weight. Risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is also higher for babies whose mothers smoke.<sup>2</sup>*

*Avoiding second-hand smoke is also important. Pregnant women who are around cigarette smoke are more likely to have babies who are born prematurely or with low birth weight than women who are not. The good news is that approximately 70% of all smokers say they want to quit, and more than 3 million Americans successfully quit smoking every year. Quitting is hard, but we know you can do it!*

*To help Veterans quit smoking and tobacco use, VA offers:*

*Screening for tobacco use during primary care visits*

*Individual counseling*

*Prescriptions for nicotine replacement therapy, such as a nicotine patch or gum, or other medications*

*Participation in evidence-based smoking cessation programs*

*The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group urges all Women Veterans to live smoke-free and improve their chance for a long and healthy life. Remember:*

*If you smoke, quit now.*

*Avoid exposure to second-hand smoke.*

*If you don't smoke, don't start.*



<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cigarette Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2004. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report [serial online]. 2005;54(44):1121–1124.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2001.



### SPOTLIGHT

Beth Grady, LCSW  
Women Veteran Program Manager

#### Greetings!

After being in my position for 11 months, I am humbled and honored to work with such a great group at the Providence VA. I am retired Air Force (with 4 years in the Army as well), and I understand the needs of our women Veterans: I am committed to working tirelessly, along with a great team, to provide the best care, anywhere! In my spare time, I take care of my three cats, collect old bottles and watch home improvement shows. I also love Japanese art and stained glass. I look forward to a great year of working on behalf of our deserving Veterans.



### Planting the Seeds of Hope for Breast Cancer



The Women Veterans Program and the Federal Women's Program sponsored a one mile walk on October 30th which included 100 staff members and Veterans. Dedication of a beautiful pink picnic table compliments of the Veterans Resource Recovery Center and the planting of 2 pink rose bushes, followed by cookies and punch, concluded the event. We had a great time!

**P.S. Are YOU due for a mammogram?**

**Call Pilar, Women Health RN, at 401-723-7100 (ext. 4241).**

### Numbers to Know: Numbers to Grow

**Eligibility & Enrollments**  
401-457-3300

**OEF/OIF Program Manager:**  
401-273-7100 ext 6137

**Mental Health hotline**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

**Telephone Assistant Program (TAP) Line**  
401-457-3336  
1-866-590-2976

**Homeless Resources**  
401-273-7100 ext 3553

**State of Rhode Island  
Department of Human  
Services Division of Veterans  
Affairs**  
401-254-8460

**Veterans Benefits  
Administration, Woman's  
Veterans Coordinator**  
401-223-3651

**Human services and helping  
agencies**  
2-1-1

### *Check us out: It's your VA too!*

There are many enhancements being made to address the needs of our women Veterans. It's a work in progress, but the staff at the Providence VA is totally committed to delivering the highest quality of care while offering you the privacy, dignity, and sensitivity that you deserve. Here are a few examples:

1. New paint and art work for identified inpatient rooms for women;
2. Additional changing tables for babies and infants are now located on the 5th floor and in the Primary Care waiting area (check out the mural!);
3. A new "nook" waiting area in Special Populations/Primary Care is an option for those women who want privacy while waiting for appointments. Call Beth Grady if you have suggestions to "name the nook" at 401-273-7100 ext 6191;
4. The main entrance now has a display case that features the accomplishments of women Veterans;
5. Gender-specific medical literature is displayed through out the medical center as well as the CBOC's.;
6. Upcoming programs include Spirituality for Women (January/February) , Heart Healthy month (February) and Women's History Month (March). Check out what's happening in the Women Veteran Bulletin board located next to the ER on the main campus;
7. Additional outreach to our lady veterans who do not use the VA system.

***More to come. Stay tuned!***



## DO YOU KNOW YOUR NUMBERS?



**Providence VA Medical Center**  
**830 Chalkstone Ave**  
**Providence Rhode Island 02908**  
**(401) 273-7100**

**Hyannis CBOC**  
**VA Primary Care Center**  
**233 Stevens Street**  
**Hyannis, MA 02601-3766**  
**Phone: (508) 771-3190**

**Middletown CBOC**  
**One Corporate Place**  
**(West Main Road at**  
**Northgate Road)**  
**Middletown, RI 02842**  
**Phone: (401) 847-6239**

**New Bedford CBOC**  
**175 Elm Street**  
**New Bedford, Mass 02740**  
**Phone: (508) 994-5489**



Nationwide, in VA hospitals and private hospitals, research is beginning to show that some important preventative health care is not being done as often in women as in men. We don't know why, but women don't receive their flu shots or have screening tests for colon cancer (colonoscopies or testing the stool for blood) as often as men do.

In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, our research shows that **high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes**, which are all risk factors for heart disease, aren't as well controlled in women as in men. A lot of people don't realize it, but heart disease is the number one killer of women (and of women veterans ) and controlling these risks, along with exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy weight, and especially not smoking, are the best way to prevent a heart attack, stroke, or premature death.

We have a lot of work ahead to try to understand these trends. In the meantime, we need your help to try to overcome the differences. Here are some things you can do:

Please make sure you get your flu shot every fall, especially if you are over 65.

If you are over 50, talk to your health care provider about colon cancer screening.

Please get your cholesterol checked once a year.

Please make sure to have your blood pressure checked at least annually.

If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, have regular appointments with your healthcare provider to make sure your disease is well controlled.

These are some goals you should try to reach if you have heart disease or diabetes:

- **Your blood pressure should be below 140/90 (130/80 if you have diabetes or kidney disease).**
- **Your LDL ("Bad ") Cholesterol should be below 100.**
- **Your Hemoglobin A1C (a test that checks your blood sugar control over time) should be below 7.5.**

All of these services are available at the VA, and we want to do our best to keep you healthy. If you have not seen your primary care provider within the past year, or want to schedule an appointment to discuss any of the above trends, call the TAP line at 401-457-3336 or 1-866-590-2976.

Thanks for working with us to get there.

Your Providence VA Women's' Health team.

*The Providence VA Medical Center is committed to meeting the unique needs of women Veterans by delivering the highest quality health care to each woman, while offering her the privacy, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs that she deserves. Our full time Women Veterans Program Manager is ready to assist you in getting timely access to the health care you need.*

**Beth Grady, LCSW**  
**Women Veteran Program Manager**  
**401-273-7100 ext. 6191**

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